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Hedar 1 to Hedar 30	Nov. 10 to Dec. 9	ripening of later cereal grains; sunny, occasional hazy mists.	harvest of cereal grains, esp. early "tyëff" for bread; "nug" and "talba" oilseeds. Teamwork in harvest and hut construction; boys take cattle from sun-scorched upland to green valleys.	12th Hedar: "Mikael" Feast, with picnics, in other localities. Minor: 6th "Qwusqwam"--clergy ends 40-day fast. Local: 21st "Zion" Festival at Aksum; Nuns' holiday.	Flirting season (esp. of adolescents) begins on "Mikael": fresh togas, beautification; tattooing (esp. adult divorced women). 21st: Church student holiday.		
Tahsas 1 to Tahsas 30	Dec. 10 to Jan. 8	Summer ("bälg"), hot, sunny, occasional light rains. Red aloes on rocks and thorny plants dominate scorched landscape. Rivers become brooks, brooks go dry.	Finish main harvests. Peasants take "tyeff" etc. to market in towns. Seeding of "summer barley" on irrigated fields. Traders organize caravans: produce and hides for salt and imports, coffee etc., cattle pastured in valleys.	19th Tahsas: "Gabriel" Feast--(because he came to Mary announcing Jesus' coming), esp. at Qulubi near Dire Daua. 29th Tahsas: Christmas ("Ledät", or "Gänna"), with all-night church services and special chants.	19th-29 is traditional hockey ("Gänna") season, with climax on Christmas. Judges begin riding their circuit to hear litigation (land tenure, damages, etc.).		19th: Emp. Haile Selassi travels to Qulubi(for "Gabriel"). 29th: Emperor receives students, in traditional toga and Jodphurs.
Ter 1 to Ter 30	Jan. 9 Feb. 7	Height of dry summer ("bälg"). Some sluggish rivers considered poisonous for cattle.	Harvest irrigated garden crops: peas (shembera), plant (gomän) (cabbage). Sell produce for taxes, and to buy salt, hot peppers, coffee.	Holy month: 11th Ter is "Temqät"(Epiphany), holiest day of year: processions to specially created pool, with sacred "tabot"(tablot), blessing of water for the coming light rains. 6th: "Gennät"(Circumcision of Jesus). 19th: "Giyorgis" (St. George) 21st: "Astärye Maryam" (Mary)	Taxgatherers collect for govt. for landlords, rent and gifts for the church. On the 11th (Epiphany), young men perform horse tournament("guga") women are coiffured, henna-reddened palms. Climax of flirting.	secondary among Falashas as harvest fest.	On Epiphany, Jan. 19th Pentecost (11th Ter), ("mayrkr") diplomats in traditional costume.	Emperor H.S. receives foreign

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Yakatit I	Feb. 8	dry; east wind brings puffy clouds (and hungry locusts) some ripening of wild fruits.	late barley("adja gebs") matures on irrigated fields and is harvested; price of sheep and other meat doubles (due to heavy meat-eating just before lenten season) 11th-20th ("abed amus").	Lenten Fast "kudade" (lit. suffering) begins after the 22nd, for 55 days though called "arba tom" (Fast of 40). 8th-10th is 3-day Fast of Niniweh ("Tsomä Nänïwe"). 16th is feast "Kedana Mehrat".	Housewives during the long Lent must show skill with vegetable dishes and spices, (even butter and milk are not allowed). Happy dancing on 16th: Jesus promised to save.	eve of 22nd: annual convention of "zar" spirit doctors.	On 12th(Feb. 19th) memorial services for Graziani massacre 1937 On 23rd(Mar. 2nd) Adua Victory(1896) celebrated.
to	to						
Yakatit 30	Mar. 9						
Mägabit I	Mar. 10	dry; burning of bush to keep locusts away, and new fields (slash-and-burn).	cultivated fruit(peach) ripens; garden crops are harvested for Lent food; commercial caravans hurry to complete tours before rains; cattle is pastured far into bush.	Minor, because of Lent: 5th "Abo-Gäbre Mänfäs Qeddus" worship and dance on Mt. Zuqwala. 19th "Debrä Zayt" commorating Mount of Olives feast in Jerusalem 27th "Medhane Aläm" =(Savior)	Youngsters pasturing cattle in far bush have liberty for games and hazing, hut-building, etc. No weddings in Lent.		
to	to						
Mägabit 30	April 8						
Miyazya 1	April 9	Light rains begin, Autumn ("bäga"). As soon as soil softens, plowings begin.	refreshed by drizzles, peasants trade for new iron plowpoints and prepare soil, esp. after Lent. Prices of meat, even grain and pepper double for Easter feasting, so buyers travel far from towns. No work during Passion week("hamamat") before Easter.	Severe fast during last 3 days of Lent, "seqlät" Good Friday on the 15th. All-night services eve of the 17th, Fassika(Easter) wearing green reeds on forehead("qotäma") given by priests Sat. morning. Resurrection("tensaä") announced 4 A.M. Sunday, meat-feast begins.	Second big wedding season from Easter to heavy rains, so unmarried girls wash clothes, redden palms, watch young men at javelin throwing and ball ("qenchebt") games.	17th: Muslims (on Easter) celebrate "Sheykh Abader" water saint.	27th(May 5th): Annual commemoration return & restoration of Haile Selassie in May 1941, ("mämlas bäal") entry into Addis Ababa
to	to						
Miyazya 30	May 8						

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Mahasē 1	August 7	Heavy rains; fishing easy in muddy, turbulent rivers.	Some sow a bit of tyōff and "Adja" barley, to have it late in harvest. Cattle taken to upland.	7th: Trinity ("Selassye"); parade, despite rain, with "tabot". 13th: Transfiguration of Jesus ("Buhe", "Debrā Tabor") feast, with torchlight parade.	13th: mock battles with whips ("jeraf") fought by young men in afternoon, between hamlets and individuals. Younger children badger adults for gifts in morning.	7th: Pictures of Emp. H.S. carried in parade, because Trinity is his namesake; flags, etc.
to	to					
Mahasē 30	Sept. 5					
Pagumen 1	Sept. 6	Rains broken by occasional sunshine.	End of tradit. fiscal year: "Nāgadras" had to account to the feudal lord for dues he had collected from merchants.	3rd: Feast of St. Raphael, the water saint, bathing in his holy water. 5th: Eve of feast of St. John: bury "lefafa sedeq", scroll; bathe.	3rd: Examination of boys in church school to decide who will be deacons; so some use drugs as stimulant. Younger children collect peas for good harvests in new year.	
2	7					
3	8					
4	9					
5	10					

796 While some of this feasting is now less orgiastic than in the past, "azmari" musicians still pass among the feasters, singing praises to the host and noble guests, [534] to the accompaniment of the single-string "masenqo" of male singers, and the banjo-like "qrar" fingered by women azmari. Torchlight parades, both of men and of women, leave the bonfire later, wind toward the nearest river or brook (still full though no longer raging) to enjoy the pleasure of bathing at its best, before the brooks dry to a trickle.

796 182 Thus the first church function of the year is an important factor in unifying this society: significant for all ages, both sexes, all classes; sets a time and place for rites of passage in the life cycle; renders visible paternalistic feudal patterns of human relationships; reopens the annual cycle of economic endeavors (caravans, weaving, etc.); reopens the pattern of kin visiting after the hibernation of 3 months; and reinforces the traditional religious as well as national values and attitudes.

796 In the months that follow there are several religious festivals, which also have social significance. Named after special saint's days, they vary from region to region.

The next widely observed holy day is Christmas, on the 29th day of the month of Tahsas. This does not nearly approach the significance it has in the Western 796 world, nor the Masqal feast just described. In fact, 526 Christmas, "Lediit" (lit. birthday) is more often refer-

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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red to as "gänna", the name of the hockey-like game played by the young men on this day, and for the next two weeks. It is a sacerdotal holy day with little social significance. The priests congregate in the church of the district that bears the name "Iyasus" (Jesus). Services begin at midnight the eve before and end with chanting and dancing inthe sunshine at 9 A.M. when the clergy parades in the churchyard.

Old Testament survivals are indicated by one of the many minor church celebrations, the feast of "gezrat" (circumcision), celebrating the circumsision of Jesus Christ a week after birth, on the 6th day of the month of Ter. It is held entirely within the church, especially monasteries.[77]

More important than Christmas is Epiphany, "Temqät", on the 11th of Ter. In the late afternoon preceding this day, the "tabot" are carried out of all churches, swathed in imported silks and borne on the heads of priests, in vast ceremonial parades that stop frequently for chanting and ceremonial dancing, until the procession, which includes national vlags, arrives at the water. There a solid, large tent hasbeen erected to house these sacred objects.

Evening chants and dances are continued to the beat of drums and tinkle of sistra, until the last light fades. The faithful surround the tent all night long as guard of honor, while feasting and drinking continues.

77. The circumcision of Jesus is also celebrated by the Christian Alqoshites, in Syria. See-Janot, E.: La Famille Assyro-Chaldéenne. Les Missions Catholiques, 65, Paris, Aout 1933, pp. 381-384.

796 smoky, incense-filled church, to reach home and begin the feasting on meat. Sheep are rapidly slaughtered all over the area, fires are lit, pepper stew is boiling everywhere, and the vast jars of barley beer, injära, coffee, and milk and butter are consumed. This feasting, often ruinous to the digestion, continues for some time, for the Wednesday and Friday fasts are abrogated for the next 50 days.

With regained strength, fired by good food and [526] beer, the young men begin games of javelin throwing. Ball games ("qenchebt") continue the entire following week, when the heavy feasting still keeps work to a minimum.

The last outdoor picnic before the rains takes place occurs on the 1st day of the month of "Genbot", when the "Ledäta" (birthday) of the Virgin Mary is celebrated. The leafy outdoor shelter, "dass", is erected for this occasion. Both women and men take part, though [789] in separate groups. At the end of the day, some women "clean house" of evil spirits, to keep them away while shut in during the rainy season. This is done by casting boiled "nefro" porridge into the bush, telling the personified sickness to go after it.

[262] During the next church holydays, fish, particularly the "senro", become staples of the menu of priests and others, since rivers begin to fill with water and fish are more plentiful. There is a church festival "räbbä kahnat" (lit. inventory of the priests), a purely internal affair,

796 the youngest are lifted to see the parade. Boys and
[857] girls age 7 to 15 go from hut to hut starting in the early morning, chanting "Buhe, Buhe", "hoyya, hoyyo, ho", and verses:

[539] "All shout 'Buhe!, children all!
Give us what (you have) prepared; Do not change (your mind)! "

"When the rooster has crowed, night is gone;
After Buhe, the winter(rainy season) is gone".

796 Long whips, mostly of finely braided fibre, of
•526 tree bark or "tucha" grass, are made before Buhe, and
[411] young men practice with them until they can hit even small targets easily. On Buhe afternoon, two groups of contestants face each other, often across a swollen brook, and line up so that each individual faces an opponent of equal skill and strength. They come armed with the whips, and begin to warm up by hurling insults at each other, addressing each other in the female gender. Soon the game of aiming at the face and ducking the adversary's whip begins. The whip has a short wooden handle, but the strap may be as long as 15 feet. Sometimes this opportunity is taken to work out grudge fights. For, traditionally, any wounds incurred, even the loss of an eye, cannot be taken to court or cause a feud, as the result of this ritual battle. No other weapons may be used. The losers flee, are pursued to their huts, and the victors are entitled to all the

796 food of the feast prepared by the losing side.
526 In the evening "fires of joy" are lit, where the rain-drenched, weary and sore contestants and others can dry out, drink barley beer, and are supposed to forget and forgive the hostilities. Some may still boast of individual feats of heroism, in Amhara warrior style; others will sulk. But generally the day ends in harmony, after the excitement which itself was a welcome break in the monotonous hibernation of the rainy season.

796 The end of the annual cycle coincides with the end of the rainy season. The last 5 days (in leap years 6 days) are added after the end of the last month, and are called "Pagumēn" or "Ḳwagmē". On the 3rd day the [776] annual festival of St. Raphael, called "qeddus Rufaēl", [821] the water saint, takes place. The rain, which still falls heavily that day, is considered "ṭebel" (holy water) and to have the power to dull the poison of snakes so [787] that their bites will not be fatal. Much rain during Pagumēn is taken as an omen that the crops will be good.

796 This day is final examination day for the boys
874 who have attended church school long enough to be promoted to "deacon". They are examined in correct chanting of liturgy and prayers. To be mentally wide awake they often go to the dabtara beforehand, and, for a small gift, obtain the stimulating herb "esa fars" (lit. Persian wood) or drink boiled "astänagär" (lit. the plant that makes to talk), which also helps to overcome stage-fright.

796 The younger children go from hut to hut, chanting:
857 "In the name of Rufael,
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855 Neglect of duty is therefore punished, and a father may fly into a sudden rage, beat the child without waiting for an excuse, even hurl a firebrand at the offending boy, so that considerable injuries sometimes occur. Mothers discipline the girls in similar temperamental fashion. But the rage, in either case, is quickly forgotten. There is no pattern of cold discipline, no "woodshed" punishment, rather hot-tempered, quick retribution.

857 Play activity and imitation of adults continues, but it takes on more seasonal and constructive characteristics. This is partly due to the seasonal pattern of the economic activities of boys age 7 to 11 and girls 5 to 14. Formal education in church school rarely begins before 11 in the rural areas, whereupon their play activities become more "extra-curricular".

[526] The seasonal games include the ball game after the harvest is completed, known as "gencheb" or "kwas", and seasonal construction and repair activities. On the church feast of Mikael, little boys have their own outdoor party, eating barley roasted on the stalk, and watching the flirtatious play of adolescent boys and girls.

291 Boys 7 to 11 still wear the tattered, knee length cotton shift, as their basic garment in rural areas, but beg a new one from relatives once a year, for the holy day of "Mäsqäl", or "Timqät". But they are increasingly self-conscious about nudity, and if the tattered shift reveals the pubic area, other boys will haze and playfully beat the offender, saying:

[539] "My father told me not to let a snake warm itself in the sun".

855 In summary, parental discipline in this age group is specific,
867 work-oriented and intermittent; while experimentation with, and

882 has arrived at the age of making full use of the sexual organ), an
831 expression not considered polite. So is the term "gorämsa", (lit. neighbor) when used to refer to a young buck at the peak age for continuous sex desire, for it signifies the male sexual organ next to its female "mate".

883 [561] At the end of adolescence, the honorific address is "kobäle" (powerful warrior), in some regions. In the old feudal tradition, this was the age when the young man could be called to war, at about 18 to 20 and beyond, for as long as he retained his physical strength as well as skill of hand and eye. Even today, at church festivals, the "gobäz" - "kobälo" category of men perform the "hotu" and "fukkara" jump-dance and military boast, shouting "Addis Ababa" to signify loyalty, and "yebalabal jebo" ("The hyena will swallow him", i.e. any enemy), (or "wardaw shebo" crow's beak) symbolizing
883 526 their readiness to defend the sacred "tabot" of the church. On the "Temqät" festival, the young "gobäz" assemble in teams of individuals on the public plain and the church parades stop to watch their game of "guks" (or gugs), a kind of tournament fought on horseback with blunt, wooden, straight lances. They race at each other at full speed, throwing the spearlike missiles at each other at close range, and ducking at the last moment. Sometimes rhinoceros shields were used for protection, but it is considered more clever to duck. Occasionally serious wounds result, and an overeager young warrior having repeatedly caused them is prevented from taking part in the future (losing his license for recklessness, so to speak).

Usually each participant has singled out a personal opponent. They are conscious that not only the eyes of the elders, priests and feudal lords are on them, but also those of the girls who follow

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

883 the turn of their fortunes with excited comments whispered in their
526 own groups. They know that the game will be discussed in individual terms until late into that night, for this is the month of intensive flirting and marriage.

At Christmas, the hockey-like game called "gänna" is played, where the team is emphasized over the individual, unlike "guks". In fact, Christmas derives its popular name, "Gänna", from the game, rather than the proper "Ledät" (lit. "birthday" of Jesus). The "fukkara" boasting, accompanied by chant and little jig-dance while holding a spear or rifle horozontally over the shoulders, is a major kin event, performed by respected and fully-grown "gobäz" at weddings and other formal family events, to recount the past heroic deeds of members of the extended family.

All these roles played by the male adolescent as he approaches and reaches young manhood complete his individual socialization, and reward him with the full attention and acknowledgement given him by his society.

B. The Adolescent Female: Informal Courtship in the Annual Cycle.

882 From puberty until she has settled as a housewife and mother, the female adolescent is addressed as "conjo" (lit. beautiful), a flattering and honorific address used in everyday language, much as "gobaz" for young men. This address designates her new status, the attention given by all to her blossoming out, her increased status in the family as a young person, and her duties of responsibility rather than mere menial routine labor of the younger "leja-gäräd". If the latter term is still used, it is often in opprobium, or in reference if she is not present.

526 Organized teams and organized competition characterizes the games of adolescents, especially boys. In ritual battles (aforementioned) and in the "ganna" game, team-moieties ("bnden") are formed ("täbmaddänä" - divided into teams), but every participant usually tries to select a personal opponent ("budänä") in the opposite team.

The "gänna" game, played on Christmas, at the public racecourse or meadow, is played with bent, hockey-like sticks ("ganna"), which are used to try to knock a baseball-sized ball, made of skins or linen, beyond a line. The ball may be picked up, thrown in the air and caught at the same spot, to confuse the opponents. The art of insult is freely practiced at the same time, such as: "cho - you play like a castrated ox". The game may last for 2 or 3 days, being resumed every morning.

The "kwas" game, played by boys throughout the dry season, somewhat resembles baseball. The ball is made of goatskin strips, sometimes with mule dung placed inside "to give it bounce". Two teams are formed, with equal distribution of big boys and little boys on each side. The goalkeeper can stop the ball only with his hips, so that he must twist his body so he can see where the ball is coming from. The ball is knocked with a stick, and there is running from base to base. The game is often accompanied, preceded and concluded with formal "boasting", in imitation of the adult, "fukkara", but differentiated as "chiwata" (play). Shouts of "särraf" (lit. pillage, the traditional shout of conquering soldiers entering a village), encourage the attacking team. There is also an umpire ("achawach": lit. master of ceremonies).

In preparation for ritual mock battles, e.g. on the Feast of the Cross, and on Transfiguration (see section on religious calendar), teams of adolescents gather, with their long whips. On less formal occasions, battles can begin with dirty looks, jostling, insults, leading to

526 organized battles similar to the "rumble" of Western culture; but Amhara adolescents are not marked as delinquents, by such activities, especially on the ritual occasions.

The "guks" game of horsemanship, on the feast of Temqat enables late adolescents and young men to show their prowess, on a ritual occasion; this is socially approved, for in gallopping and throwing the imitation lances, in their military maneuvers, they symbolize their readiness to defend their society, their kinsmen, their district, and the Coptic Abyssinian church, i.e. the "faith". The game itself has been likened to the "jarid" game of Arab culture (footnote 98).

524 Among leisure-time games, played by adults of either sex, and also by adolescents, the most popular is the pebble game called "gäbäta". It is played with a single partner, and there is little intensity to try to win, rather pleasure in shared activity, in a leisurely fashion: Two parallel rows of grooves are carved into a flat rock, 6 grooves in each row. The two players place 4 pebbles in each hole, so that each owns 24 pebbles in 6 grooves at the start. The game consists of passing the little pebbles ("gebeta") from hole to hole ("gudaguad").:

Illustration 1: Positions in the Pebble Game "gäbäta".

Player:

A o o o o o o ← direction of play

1 2 3 4 5 6

B o o o o o o → direction of play

B begins by removing one pebble from position B6, palms it in his hand. He then takes one pebble from the opponent's position A6, placing it into the A5 groove; he then takes from A4, places pebble in A3

A2, " A1

B1, " B2

B5, " B6 ;

then he completes position A6 by placing in it the originally palmed

Footnote 98 - Dawson: The Date and the Arab. Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, 1950, p. 37

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 796 the long rains. Children go singing from house to house in small bands, or take bunches of wild flowers to relatives, in hopes of getting a bit of *dābo*. In most homes an animal is slaughtered—in some areas superstition decrees that it be a white-headed lamb or a red chicken—and there is much eating and drinking, the basic activity of every holiday.

A little more than two weeks later the much more important festival of Masqal is observed, celebrating the discovery of the true Cross by Empress Helena. By this time the heavy rains have subsided, and the air is filled with [132] something of the spirit of spring. (Although Ethiopia lies north of the equator the summer rainy season is known as "winter" because of its coldness.) The landscape is colored by acres of yellow wildflowers, which are cut and fastened to the poles each family brings to a central clearing where a huge bonfire is built. In late afternoon, after the tepee of poles has been con- [554] structed, the priests begin the ceremony by intoning appropriate chants. Then each status group circles the poles three times, in honor of the Trinity—first the local lord, then the clergy, the lesser nobility, the peasant men, women, and finally the children. In the evening the festival takes a more secular turn. The bonfire is lit, and the young braves dance around it shouting their war chants. As the fire blazes on, these fellows seize burning brands and playfully hurl them at one another.

In November the monthly St. Michael's Day is honored with special cele- [778] brations. The peasants travel distances to attend the ceremonies at any church consecrated to "Mikā'ēl." Holy water and hot springs sanctified by Mikā'ēl's name are drunk and bathed in by those with many kinds of disease. The rituals involve carrying the Mikā'ēl *tābot* ("holy ark") out of the church and elaborate chanting and dancing by the clergy. After the *tābot* has been returned, in a procession in which the laymen follow shouldering their rifles (undoubtedly spears in older times), folk dancing and singing go on until late [584] afternoon. This provides an occasion for the more enterprising adolescent male to spot a potential bride, about whom he may diffidently ask his father to make inquiries.

*565 796 • 526 Christmas, celebrated in early January, is marked chiefly by the playing of secular games. The common word for Christmas, *gannā*, is actually the name of an outdoors game played with sticks and a wooden puck. Played by boys, young men, and occasionally elders on the afternoon of Christmas Day, *gannā* is marked by a spirit of aggressive license. Accustomed norms of deference are held in abeyance. The game is played in so rough and disorderly a manner that it often results in broken limbs and scarred faces. Staged by two teams made up on the spot, *gannā* is concluded at dusk by volleys of abusive limericks with which the victors revile their adversaries.[4]

*565 796 This is the season for special festivities on saints' days. St. Gabriel is particularly honored in December, as are St. Mary, St. George, and again St. Michael

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

hazardous. Moisture and chill lower the resistance of man and beast to respiratory infections. The weekly fasting schedule is resumed, and the more devout observe the thirty-day fast of the Disciples. In August, finally, the sixteen-day fast in honor of the Assumption of Mary is observed by everyone older than six or seven years.

On the thirteenth day of that fast occurs the strange holiday of Buhē. Before and during this day, which is marked by the baking of special *dābo* for the shepherds, the countryside crackles with the reports of shepherds' whips. In this season when the humid air lends an explosive sound, the shepherds crack their whips for fun; but older boys and men join in great whipping battles on Buhē,* in which two teams lash each other until the members of one can stand it no more. On the evenings of Buhē, small bonfires are lit all over the countryside, and more *dābo* is eaten and whips cracked.[5] A few days later the fast of the Assumption is over. Young and old look forward to the end of the rains and the festivities that commence with the new year.

These are the days and years of the Amhara peasant. Some other aspects of his life that come to the fore when more analytic perspectives are applied will be discussed in later chapters. But this calendar of activities forms the immediately observable setting for the "inner world" of the Amhara peasantry: those ideas, sentiments, and values which constitute its outlook on life.

THE WORLD OF MEANING

The Natural Universe

The Amhara peasant is not familiar with most of the cosmological notions found in the Great Tradition of Abyssinian culture, as transmitted through books like *Qalamsis* and *Aksimareos* and the oral traditions of learned churchmen. It is unusual for him to have a precise image of the layers of water, fire, and air beneath the earth, and it is still less likely for him to be familiar with the complicated hierarchy of invisible worlds, watery skies, and seven "real" heavens which are enumerated in the Abyssinian cosmology. He believes that stars influence human affairs, but leaves the possession of astrological knowledge to the *dabtarā*. The presence of cultural specialists who know about such matters has relieved him of the burden of dealing with ideas about the cosmos, ideas which are more widely diffused in more homogeneous societies.

The peasant's working conception of the cosmos is thus a very simplified version of that of his Great Tradition, together with certain pagan notions. Like his more learned countrymen, he divides the universe into two main parts: the world, *alam*, consisting of the earth, sun, moon, and stars; and

* This custom is now extinct in many Amhara areas.